

Nigel Bushnell, Principal Examiner, GCSE History

I have taught history for the past 24 years, in a total of four different schools. I have been an examiner for 22 years with Edexcel, and have been a principal examiner for the past five years.

I have led teacher INSET days and feedback sessions for a long time, and I think they are a very good thing. They are not secret events in any way. All teachers know about them.

Teachers get a lot out of these events. There is less local authority support than ever now, and many teachers really benefit from talking to colleagues about good history teaching and learning. The events are two-way processes, with teachers feeding back to exam boards as well as hearing from the boards about the course specification. They are not simply there to help pass exams – they also help teachers meet colleagues, join together content and understand what helps pupils learn. At all INSETs I see teachers by the end of the day swapping contact details to share and develop teaching and learning resources.

Recalling the meeting that the reporter attended, the feedback I received was that all of the teachers who attended the course thought that they had learned a lot. I was extremely relieved that The Daily Telegraph did not misrepresent my views.

However, there is one thing I'd like to clarify about a "two-year cycle" comment. It means that there is a two-year cycle within which a resit student cannot (and reasonably so) expect to be assessed again with exactly the same question. It does **not** mean that there is a two-year cycle and that the **same** questions appear again. This was also part of an explanation that modularisation is therefore **not** easier and that teachers need to ensure coverage of the **whole** specification.

At one point I remember that I used the phrase, "this makes the exam more accessible for lower-ability students". The reason I said this was that history (unlike geography, for example) does not have a 'foundation tier' for lower-ability students. The bullet points are designed carefully to help weaker students structure their responses to those questions which require extended answers.

I state very clearly in all of my courses that the exam is not led by any single student book at all. I make it very clear that it is the teacher's professional responsibility to read the publicly available specification, and to teach it in its entirety. If a teacher feels that a textbook does not cover any

aspect of the specification adequately then the teacher should find additional teaching and learning materials for their students.

When the journalist asked me which exam board to go for as "easiest", I didn't recommend Edexcel, or any other board. I recommended they talk to the other teachers present and discuss it. I always state that it is not my place to comment on other examination boards and also that I do not know them sufficiently to make any worthwhile comments.

The journalist at the end said that she had private exam students and didn't know which board they should be studying for. I recommended IGCSE, since we do not allow private students to enter for controlled assessment as we cannot authenticate the work as being their own.

I can say with 100% certainty that I was not giving away any hints about future material. I feel, as I am sure that many of my colleagues will state, that I have total integrity in all my work as a Principal Examiner from question paper setting, through the marking process and in delivering INSET.

I am fortunate to work with a dedicated and committed team at Edexcel who work hard to serve as many students and teachers as best they can.